

NCN Child and Young Person Wellbeing Strategy

A New Approach
for Child and Young
Person Services



Prepared by:



Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY
Wellness Centre Inc.

S U M M A R Y



This document has been prepared to promote opportunities and improvements for Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation through strategies that will enhance the well-being of its youth. These strategies were developed with consideration to ensure there is a unified approach from NCN entities, and federal and provincial governments. These bodies will continue to have a fiduciary responsibility to provide funding, compensation and support under existing agreements, and will also work together toward a common goal for our children.

This document is an abbreviated version of the more detailed Youth Wellness Strategy. If there are discrepancies within that document and the ideas outlined here, that document will prevail. Please see the Youth Wellness Strategy for more information about any item discussed here.



What is the NCN Child and Young Person Wellbeing Strategy?

The purpose of this Strategy is to create a framework to improve child and youth wellbeing. The framework provides a shared understanding of what children and young people want and need to thrive. It sets out what we as community entities, programs and services can do to support them as they create healthy lives.

The Strategy aims to identify the nature and scale of changes needed in policy, funding, and service delivery for children and their families. To make progress, governments, agencies and service providers need to put the wellbeing of children and young people at the very centre of policy, service design and delivery, and provide seamless support. Aligning the efforts and investments of these organizations will make the greatest impact.

Continuum of Care – A Holistic Approach



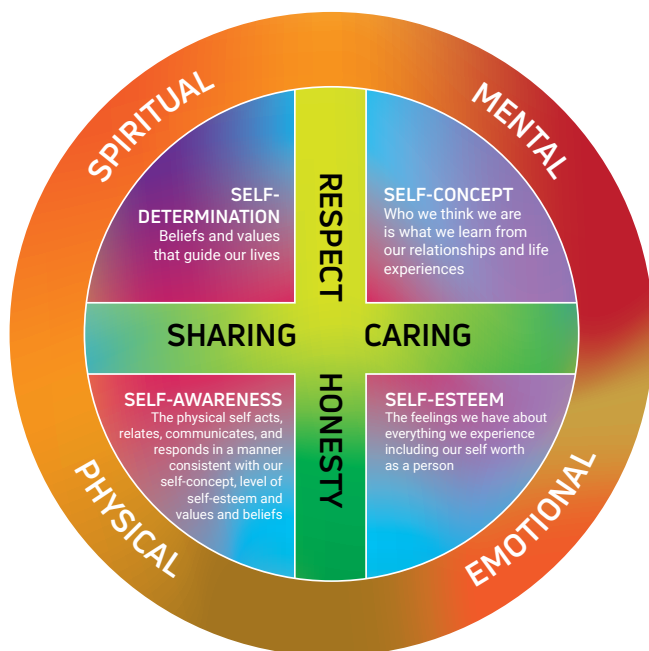
NCN Values & Guiding Principles at the Heart of the Strategy

When compiling these strategies, careful consideration was given to Nehetho Guiding Principles and customary laws. They will impact the decision-making process, resources, workforce, and the funds that will be allocated for implementation/action/work planning.

Opportunities for feedback will occur periodically to assure the Strategies remain current and reflect the realities and aspirations of our Nation.

Agencies and partners must demonstrate an understanding of NCN needs and ambitions; support self-determination as a means of improving wellbeing; and respond in ways that enable NCN children and young people to have the same opportunities as others to reach their full potential.

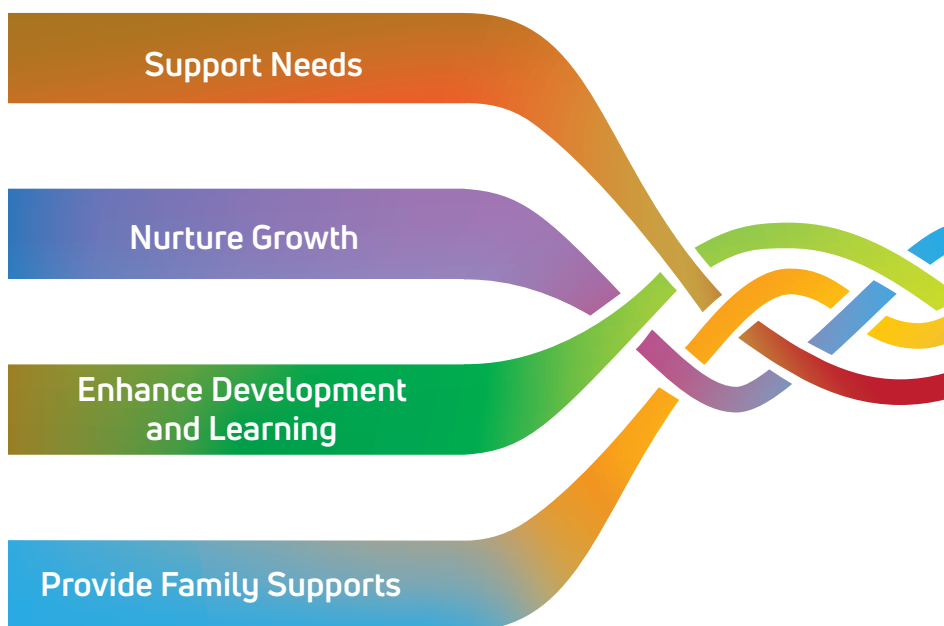
Values and Beliefs



Vision

“NCN is the best place in the world for children and young people to grow, develop and thrive.”

We must ensure children have the best environment to develop their potential and live healthy lives. Achieving this vision also means supporting the wellbeing of parents, caregivers, families and the community, so that our children and young people have a strong foundation upon which they can build their dreams. This can be envisioned as the strands of a sweetgrass braid woven together to create a strong unified vision.





Challenges

Hardships at home

Too many NCN youth are facing challenges in their lives. Some of their obstacles include growing up in households in poverty; facing sexual and physical violence; being taken into care due to family violence; and dealing with neglect. These difficulties create situations in which children are not receiving the care and support they need.

Fragmentation of effort

Fragmentation and lack of coordination happens vertically (between national, provincial and local government); horizontally (between different agencies and service providers); by age (such as prenatal and postnatal, preschool, school age, and post-secondary); and by different areas of need (such as parenting support, family violence, job seeking). This fragmentation results in different groups trying to solve parts of the same puzzle without a common set of goals.

Aligning the actions of governments, service providers and the community has the potential to create the transformative change required for the Strategy to achieve its vision.

Accountability

Full implementation of the Strategy requires accountability across various governments and agencies. In this way, the broader social, environmental and economic policies will work together efficiently to drive change and enable collective effort, including locally-influenced solutions.

Inequities

A priority needs to be placed on addressing the challenges and inequities experienced by NCN youth by improving services and support for those with the greatest needs.

Tracking, Sharing & Recording Successes

By committing to achieving wellbeing for all children and young people, and regularly reporting on progress, an environment is created in which informal networks, such as family and community members closest to the child, can demand change and accountability.



Guiding Principles

- Children & young people are our most valuable resource
- The rights of children & young people must be respected and upheld
- All children & young people deserve a good life
- Early support is essential
- Wellbeing requires holistic & comprehensive approaches
- The wellbeing of youth is interwoven with family & community wellness
- Change requires action from all of us



Outcomes

Six high-level outcomes for child and youth wellbeing are set out in this strategic document. These outcomes are interconnected.



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SAFE, LOVED, AND NURTURED

This includes loving homes that are free from violence and neglect; safe from avoidable harm; and enjoy quality time with family and community.

Why is this important?

The best place for a child is in the safe, loving and stable care of family. A consistent home environment with love and trust influences a young person's wellbeing every day, and their ability to form attachments to others.

But some children live in families with toxic stress and complex needs, including intergenerational trauma, low income and unemployment, unaddressed health needs, parental addiction, and family violence. These families need support in multiple areas so their children feel safe to express themselves, build resilience skills, and thrive.



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE WHAT THEY NEED

This includes basic material needs, such as regular access to nutritious food and stable housing that is safe, warm and dry, provided by their caregivers who have access to quality employment.

Why is this important?

All young people deserve to grow up in families and communities that have the resources to help them thrive. Too many families are living in lack, and are excluded from an acceptable standard of living.

Poor housing conditions, insufficient space, and frequent relocations can have negative consequences on health. Food insecurity, inadequate nutrition, and poor water quality can have a far-reaching impact on children's development and learning. Caregivers may need support and training to develop the skills required to gain and keep employment. To ensure healthy environments for children, these basic resources are essential.



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE HAPPY AND HEALTHY

This includes physical and mental wellbeing; spaces to play and opportunities to express themselves; and healthy environments.

Why is this important?

A focus on early development is crucial for a child's success throughout life. Beginning in utero, a child needs a healthy environment free of toxins, strong brain development, and responsive interaction with caregivers.

A baby's needs are best met by stable families who have the skills to establish a deep, loving connection with their child. A healthy community with accessible parks and public spaces that encourage play, and regulated activities that nurture skills-building, creates young people with strong physical and mental health. The benefits will continue throughout life.



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE LEARNING AND DEVELOPING

This includes building knowledge, skills and capabilities; developing critical thinking, self-confidence and potential; and navigating life's transitions.

Why is this important?

Acquiring knowledge happens at home, at school, and in the wider world. Strong relationships, relevant experiences and high quality learning opportunities – with a special focus on early years – play a critical role in children's development.

It is critical that all learning environments value and respect NCN identity, language and culture. Children and young people learn better when they feel engaged, safe and included. A strong sense of self and community will ground young people as they make their way in a rapidly changing world.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ACCEPTED, RESPECTED AND CONNECTED

This includes living free from racism and discrimination; a sense of belonging and identity; positive relationships; and kindness and compassion for others.

Why is this important?

When children are comfortable with who they are and how they fit into this place and time, they are more likely to have confidence and a positive self-image.

Young people need support and a strong sense of self to move through life with ease, and to navigate the new challenges of online information and social media. If a child feels different in any way, they must be celebrated and accepted just as they are, without having to fit into limiting norms. When a child feels understood and safe, they can have respect and empathy for others.



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED AND EMPOWERED

This includes contributing positively at home and at school; caring for their community and the land; making informed choices about relationships, drugs and alcohol; and increasing their autonomy and responsibility as they age.

Why is this important?

When young people feel a sense of belonging, they are motivated to care for others and dream for the future. They must have the opportunity to provide their insight and perspectives, and have their voices heard in matters that affect them.

Children who are taught about the risks and responsibilities of the choices they make can be purposeful about their own wellbeing and that of their communities and nature around them. When young people are allowed to take on responsibility and make autonomous decisions, they gain confidence, galvanize their peers, influence change and determine their own futures.

Your Opinion Matters

When reviewing these strategies, please consider the following:

- What do you think of the Strategy?
- Is there anything missing from the Strategy?
- Are there any outcomes that are missing?
- Are there any outcomes that should not be included?
- Which outcomes or specific areas should be prioritized?
- What do the children and young people of NCN mean to our community?
- Which groups/organizations/governments need to “buy in” to the Strategy for it to be successful?
- How can we attain their “buy in”?



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